

Baptism and The Lord's Supper

As a Christian, What is the Importance of Baptism and the Lord's Supper in My Life?

The New Testament establishes two ordinances: Baptism and the Lord's Supper. The ordinances of the local church commemorate the death, burial and resurrection of the Lord Jesus Christ. Ordinances are not "sacraments". Churches who practice sacraments try to dispense grace through a ceremony or work, rather than through the Lord Jesus Christ. There is no special grace received in an ordinance, however, Jesus left us these memorials to keep before us a reminder of his sacrifice on the cross for our sins, and our identification with Him. The purpose of this lesson is to give the Bible's clear and definite teaching on these two important observances of the church.

Baptism

The first act of obedience for a Christian is the ordinance of Baptism. Virtually all religious denominations teach some form of baptism as part of their doctrine, and the diversities in their teachings are wide. This section of the lesson will examine the Biblical teaching on baptism, and the important role baptism plays in the life of a believer in Jesus Christ.

- I Baptism is NOT essential for salvation.
 - A Salvation is by grace through faith in the sacrifice of Jesus Christ on the cross. Nothing you do can be added to the grace of God for salvation.
Ephesians 2:8-9, Romans 6:23
 - B The clearest case of an individual's baptism in the Bible is the Ethiopian eunuch in Acts chapter 8; specifically in verse 37. Before he could be baptized in water, he had to confess his faith in the Lord Jesus Christ as his Saviour.
Acts 8:26-39
 - C The requirements for baptism are the same requirements for salvation: Heart belief in Jesus Christ and confession that he is Lord and Saviour. Until you meet the conditions for salvation, baptism is meaningless.
Romans 10:9-10

For by grace are ye saved through faith; and that not of yourselves: *it is* the gift of God: Not of works, lest any man should boast.
Ephesians 2:8-9

D These examples in the Bible of an individual believer's baptism occurred AFTER the person's salvation.

- 1 The people of Samaria
Acts 8:12
- 2 The Ethiopian eunuch
Acts 8:36-39
- 3 The apostle Paul
Acts 9:18
- 4 Cornelius and his house
Acts 10:47-48
- 5 The Philippian jailer and his house
Acts 16:25-33
- 6 The people of Corinth
Acts 18:8

*Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost: Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world. Amen.
Matthew 28:19-20*

II Baptism IS essential for your spiritual growth.

- A Jesus himself set the example by submitting to baptism before his ministry began.
Matthew 3:13-17, Mark 1:9-11, Luke 3:21-22
- B Your growth in Jesus Christ will be hindered if you will not obey a simple command of God. The Great Commission makes baptism an integral part of God's mission.
Matthew 28:19-20

THE KEY POINT OF THIS LESSON:

Baptism is the first act of obedience for a believer. Before you can be taught to follow Jesus Christ, you must be willing to submit to the first thing God requires of you. By submitting to baptism, a Christian demonstrates his outward manifestation of an inward attitude of heart. Any believer can be baptized. It only requires obedience.

III Baptism has a clear purpose in your life.

- A Water baptism is your public testimony of your faith in Jesus Christ.
Psalm 107:2, Romans 1:16, 10:11
 - B Water baptism pictures the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ.
Romans 6:1-7
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- IV The Biblical method of baptism is complete immersion.
- A Every Bible example of an individual baptism was by immersion.
- 1 Jesus “came up out of the water” in his baptism.
Matthew 3:16, Mark 1:10
 - 1 Both Philip and the Ethiopian eunuch went down into the water and came back up out of the water.
Acts 8:36-39
- B Baptism is associated with the terms “buried” and “raised” in the Bible. The only way to bury someone is to put them completely under the ground. The Biblical method of baptism is complete immersion because it pictures the death burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ. No one in the Bible was ever sprinkled with water for baptism because no one can be buried by sprinkling dirt on them.
Colossians 2:12, Romans 6:4

The Lord's Supper

The other ordinance of the local church is the remembrance of the “Last Supper” the night before Jesus’ death. Some religions have made this ordinance a ritual and ceremony, and a central part of their doctrine of salvation. Like baptism, it is not essential for salvation, but it is very important for your new life in Jesus Christ. This part of the lesson is designed to give you a Biblical understanding of how to apply the memorial of the last supper to your Christian life.

- I As a believer in Jesus Christ, you are to participate in the Lord's Supper.
- A Jesus himself instituted the observance of the Lord's Supper when he said, “...this do in remembrance of me.” One of the primary reasons to observe the Lord's Supper is for a regular remembrance of the price that Jesus paid for your sins.
Luke 22:14-20
- B Paul confirms the observance of the Lord's Supper for the New Testament church as a memorial of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for sin.
I Corinthians 11:20-34
- II The Lord's Supper is a picture of the suffering of Jesus Christ.
- A The bread is broken to remind you that Jesus’ body was “broken” for your sins.
I Corinthians 11:24, Isaiah 53:4-6

*And he took the cup, and gave thanks, and said, Take this, and divide it among yourselves: For I say unto you, I will not drink of the fruit of the vine, until the kingdom of God shall come. And he took bread, and gave thanks, and brake it, and gave unto them, saying, This is my body which is given for you: this do in remembrance of me. Likewise also the cup after supper, saying, This cup is the new testament in my blood, which is shed for you.
Luke 22:17-20*

B The juice is “poured out” by drinking it to remind you that the blood of Jesus Christ was shed for your sins.
Matthew 26:26-29

III The Lord's Supper is important in your Christian life.

A There are three specific “views” you should take at the Lord's Supper.

1 Past tense - To remind you of what Jesus did to pay for your sins.
I Corinthians 11:26: “...ye do show the Lord's death...”

2 Present tense - To judge your own sins. Remembering the death of Jesus Christ will also remind you of your sins. God wants you to examine your life so you can judge and confess your sins. When you do, he can forgive you and keep you clean for him.
I Corinthians 11:27-32, I John 1:9

3 Future tense - To anticipate his second coming. When Jesus returns, you should want to be clean before him so as not to be ashamed. This observance reminds you of his soon coming.

(i) The Lord's Supper observes his death, “...till he come.”
I Corinthians 11:26

(ii) Jesus referred to his coming earthly kingdom at the Last Supper.
Matthew 26:26-29, Mark 14:22-25

B NOT observing the Lord's Supper consistently or properly can have a negative affect on you. Some partake “unworthily” by not examining their spiritual life and walk with God, and bring chastisement from God.
I Corinthians 11: 27-32

For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come.
1 Corinthians 11:26

THE KEY POINT OF THIS LESSON:

The most important events in history are the death, burial and resurrection of Jesus Christ, and his return to earth. Just as you observe special days in your life by a “remembrance”, the Lord's Supper is to be observed as a memorial by the church of the sacrifice of Jesus Christ for your sins, and to remind you he will come again soon.

- IV The elements used in the Lord's Supper are a symbol, not his literal body and blood.
- A A literal body and blood would violate the law of God.
- 1 Eating human flesh is cannibalism and against the law of God.
Genesis 9:4, Leviticus 26:27-29, Ezekiel 5:8-10
 - 2 Drinking blood is outlawed in the Bible, and connected with false worship.
Leviticus 17:10-14, Deuteronomy 32:16-17, 31-33, 37-38,
Psalm 16:4
- B The specific elements used are a picture of the body and blood of Jesus Christ.
- 1 Unleavened bread is used to signify the pure body of Jesus Christ. Leaven in the Bible speaks of corruption, sin, and false teaching, and was forbidden in Israel's Passover feast.
1 Corinthians 5:6-9, Matthew 16:6-12, Deuteronomy 16:1-4
 - 2 Grape juice is used to signify his blood. It is unfermented because every mention of the "cup" at the Last Supper is said to be the "fruit of the vine".
Matthew 26:29, Mark 14:25, Luke 22:18

Basic questions you may be asking:

Where should I be baptized?

Since baptism is a public profession of your faith in Jesus Christ, and an ordinance of the local church, most baptisms are done publicly at the church. But it does not have to be. For instance, Jesus was baptized in the river Jordan. Any public body of water large enough for immersion will suffice. The actual place of baptism is not as important as the public testimony of your identification with the Lord Jesus Christ.

How often should we partake of the Lord's Supper?

The only instruction in the Bible is, "As often as you will". As an ordinance of the local church, it is the decision of each church how often they participate in the Lord's Supper. It should be frequent enough to maintain a proper reminder of the sacrifice of Christ, but not so often that it becomes a ritual or ceremony and loses its meaning.

Who is qualified to perform baptisms or serve the Lord's Supper?

Since these observances are an ordinance of the local church, it is the responsibility of the pastors and / or deacons of the church, as a public memorial of Jesus' sacrifice.

Do you have any other questions about this subject?

REVIEW AND DISCUSSION:

There are many popular beliefs which are contrary to the truths of the word of God. A discussion of these issues in light of the principles you just learned should give you a proper understanding of this lesson and correct some of these misconceptions:

- 1.) Why don't people have to be baptized in order to be saved?

- 2.) Why isn't baptism by sprinkling just as valid as immersion?

- 3.) Why is it not proper to baptize babies into God's family or the "church"?

- 4.) What are the personal benefits of participating in a regular observance of the Lord's Supper?

- 5.) Why is it not required to observe the Lord's Supper at every church service?

Memory Verses:

Romans 6:4: "Therefore we are buried with him by baptism into death: that like as Christ was raised up from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life."

Acts 8:37: "And Philip said, If thou believest with all thine heart, thou mayest. And he answered and said, I believe that Jesus Christ is the Son of God."

I Corinthians 11:26: "For as often as ye eat this bread, and drink this cup, ye do shew the Lord's death till he come."